

1 Sec. X. DEFINITIONS

2 (1) “CARES Act” means the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
3 Security Act, Pub. L. No.116–136, as amended, and any guidance and
4 regulations issued under that act.

5 (2) “Municipality” means a city, town, or incorporated village.

6 (3) “Eligible use” means a use of grant funds permitted under the
7 CARES Act to assist a municipality in digitizing land records for public access
8 during municipal office closures due to the COVID-19 public health
9 emergency.

10 Sec. Y. CORONAVIRUS MUNICIPAL RECORDS DIGITIZATION

11 GRANTS; AGENCY OF ADMINISTRATION

12 (a) Authorization; appropriation. Of the funds available in the Coronavirus
13 Relief Fund, the amount of \$5,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of
14 Administration to provide grants to eligible municipalities pursuant to this
15 section.

16 (b) Requirements for grant applicants. A municipality may apply for a
17 grant for an eligible use, provided that:

18 (1) The municipality was compelled to close its municipal offices or
19 limit access to land records due to the COVID-19 public health emergency
20 response.

1 (2) The municipality has established and maintained a Restoration and
2 Preservation Reserve Fund pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1671.

3 (c) Grant amount; terms.

4 (1) The Agency shall establish a formula for determining the amount of
5 grant awards, which shall include a maximum grant amount. The amount of
6 each grant shall be sufficient to ensure that the preceding 40 years of a
7 municipality’s land records may be digitized and made available to the public.

8 (2) The Agency shall consider whether and by how much grant awards
9 should be adjusted based on:

10 (A) whether a municipality has received financial assistance from
11 other sources;

12 (B) the funds available for digitization in a municipality’s
13 Restoration and Preservation Reserve Fund;

14 (C) the number of property transactions within a municipality based
15 on property transfer tax data reported by the Department of Taxes; and

16 (D) whether a municipality closed or limited access to the municipal
17 clerk’s offices during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

18 Sec. Z. GUIDELINES; REPORTING

19 (a) Guidelines. Not later than ten days after the effective date of this act,
20 the Agency of Administration shall publish guidelines governing the
21 implementation of the grant program, which at minimum shall establish:

1 (1) application and award procedures;

2 (2) standards for eligible uses of grant funds;

3 (3) standards governing the amount of grant awards to ensure:

4 (A) the equitable distribution of funds among regions of the State;

5 and

6 (B) that grants are based on need and will have a meaningful impact

7 on the ability of the public to access digitized land records;

8 (4) procedures to ensure that grant awards comply with the requirements

9 of the CARES Act and that the State maintains adequate records to

10 demonstrate compliance with the Act; and

11 (5) procedures to prevent, detect, and mitigate fraud, waste, error, and

12 abuse.

13 (b) Reporting. The Agency shall:

14 (1) provide weekly updates and information concerning grant

15 guidelines, awards, and implementation to the committees of jurisdiction of the

16 General Assembly; and

17 (2) submit a report to the General Assembly on or before August 15,

18 2020 detailing the implementation of this section, including specific

19 information concerning the amount and identity of grant recipients, which shall

20 be publicly available.

1 (c) In the event that the federal Department of the Treasury determines that
2 an expenditure of funds made available from the CARES Act was not
3 necessary or was otherwise impermissible under the Act, the Agency shall hold
4 harmless any grant recipient that accepted grant funds in good faith reliance on
5 the State concerning the municipality’s application for, or use of, the grant
6 award.